



RECORDS MANAGEMENT ADVICE

Issued: July 2016

Basics of Records Management: **Working Documents and Drafts**

Purpose: Provide guidance to state government agencies on required retention of working documents and drafts.

Working documents and drafts are public records but they might only need to be retained for a brief period of time if they do not have significant administrative, legal, fiscal or historical value.

Considerations when retaining working documents and drafts:

- Significance of the document being drafted;
- Specific legal requirements relating to the retention of certain preliminary drafts;
- Need for records as evidence that the agency practiced due diligence in the drafting process;
- Unique/substantive information relating to formulation and execution of high-level policies, decisions, actions, or responsibilities.

Other types of working documents and drafts supporting certain financial, legal, and other mission-critical functions, however, may continue to have value even after the final, official copy has been approved. Agencies should have clearly defined policies and/or schedules regarding the retention and disposition of these types of working documents and drafts. Any record management decisions (not clearly defined) should be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your Records Officer.

Examples of drafts that might be immediately discarded following the creation of a new draft are:

- Documents which do not contain unique information documenting significant policy development, action, or decision making.
- Preliminary drafts produced solely for proof reading or internal discussion, reference or consultation. Materials may include notes, associated transmittals, and reference and background materials.
- Documents containing only minor non-substantive changes such as correction of grammar and/or spelling or minor “word-smithing.”

Agency policy should address internal record requirements for staff and also target record management procedures for those documents circulated to outside agencies, including but not limited to working documents and drafts. For some agencies, statute and/or rule dictate the retention of this type of material.

Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available at
<http://www.maine.gov/sos/arc/records/state/statetraining.html>

“The right record, to the right person, at the right time, at the lowest possible cost”